

**To:** Matthew Betenson[mbetenso@blm.gov]  
**From:** Crutchfield, Larry  
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Congressional Biannual Briefing Hot Topics 04-28-17.docx  
Decisions or Actions Expected in 2017 UTAH.xlsx

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bird, Lola** <[lbird@blm.gov](mailto:lbird@blm.gov)>  
Date: Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 3:19 PM  
Subject: Hot Topics Update DD: Aug. 14  
To: BLM UT ELT <[blm\\_ut\\_elt@blm.gov](mailto:blm_ut_elt@blm.gov)>, BLM UT PAOs <[blm\\_ut\\_paos@blm.gov](mailto:blm_ut_paos@blm.gov)>  
Cc: "Barangan, Jayson" <[jbaranga@blm.gov](mailto:jbaranga@blm.gov)>

Good afternoon UELT members,  
In preparation for a potential ASLM visit to Utah, we have been asked to update Hot Topics. Attached is the latest version for you to review and edit. Please add any new topics that may be needed. The Washington Office has requested that they be in paragraph format rather than the current bulleted format, so please keep that in mind when making your updates.

Also attached is the latest 2017 Decisions document for your reference in determining topics.

Please work with your PAO to complete edits and send to Jayson Barangan by COB Monday, Aug. 14 so we can get them finalized and sent to Washington.

Thank you so much for your help with this request!

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Lola Bird  
BLM Utah External Affairs  
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Respectfully,  
Larry "E" Crutchfield  
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**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT UTAH  
PROGRAM UPDATES  
April 28, 2017**

**ENERGY**

**Statewide Energy Overview**

- In Fiscal Year (FY) 16, the Office of Natural Resources Revenue reported \$146,279,546 in revenue from oil and gas development activities in Utah (royalties, rentals and bonus bid payments). Total revenue generated from all minerals including coal was \$185,502,592. The State of Utah received nearly \$70 million from federal oil and gas revenues.
- As of Feb. 22, 2017, there were 2,973 authorized oil and gas leases covering 2,875,091 acres in Utah and 1,813 leases on 1,411,088 acres were held by production.
- BLM Utah is looking to streamline oil and gas leasing Expressions of Interest (EOIs) through restructuring the pre-lease process involving the UT920 leasing staff, UT930 resources staff, and Field Offices—including a proposal to reconstitute a statewide leasing team and seek to offer parcels statewide at each quarterly sale if the onerous requirements under current leasing guidance are relaxed. This effort is currently underway.
- BLM Utah is looking identify and process deferred EOI nominations after confirmation that industry is still interested in those nominations and restructure the parceling process to maximize size and continuity of parcels.

In FY16, BLM-Utah conducted two oil and gas lease sales:

- Acres Nominated – 353,249
- Acres Offered for Sale – 52,444
- Acres Receiving Bids – 22,772
- Total Receipts - \$314,255

**Greens Hollow Coal Lease by Application (LBA)**

- The BLM and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) were co-leads on the project, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement participated as a cooperating agency. The USFS signed the Record of Decision on Oct. 5, 2015 and sent the BLM a letter of consent to lease.
- BLM-Utah held the coal lease sale on Jan. 4, 2017, at the Salt Lake City Main Library. Canyon Fuel Company, LLC, of Grand Junction, Colorado, submitted a bid in the amount of \$22.85 million, or \$3,700.17 per acre. On March 14, 2017, the BLM issued the lease, which went into effect on April 1, 2017.

**Flat Canyon Coal LBA**

- BLM-Utah conducted the Flat Canyon coal lease sale on June 17, 2015, offering 42 million tons from the 2,692-acre Flat Canyon tract. The BLM received a bid from Canyon Fuel Company, LLC, of Grand Junction, Colorado, for \$17.2 million or \$6,388.92 per acre. The BLM subsequently issued the Flat Canyon lease on July 1, 2015.

- On Sept. 11, 2015, WildEarth Guardians and Grand Canyon Trust filed suit in US District Court arguing that the BLM approved the lease based on outdated environmental review and inadequate analysis of potential impacts to air quality and climate. The case has not yet been ruled on and settlement negotiations are being pursued.
- The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement prepared an Environmental Assessment in conjunction with the BLM's approved mine plan for the tract, which may have bearing on the WildEarth Guardians lawsuit.

#### **Alton Coal Mine Lease by Application**

- Alton Coal Development, LLC submitted a lease by application to expand the existing surface coal mine from private mineral estate to federal mineral estate in 2004.
- Following receipt of the application, a tract delineation, scoping, publication of a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and supplemental EIS were completed.
- Following the issuance of Secretarial Order 3348 on March 29, 2017, which revoked Secretarial Order 3338, or the “coal moratorium,” Alton withdrew their request to divide the LBA into two tracts. The BLM is currently working on the final EIS, which will consider the full tract proposed in the original LBA.

#### **San Rafael Desert Master Leasing Plan**

- Comprised of 525,000 acres in Emery and Wayne Counties, the Master Leasing Plan (MLP) will consider whether to amend leasing decisions in the 2008 Price and Richfield Field Office Resource Management Plans (RMP).
- The MLP will enable the Price and Richfield Field Offices to resolve lease protests for four parcels in the planning area that have been sold but not issued. The MLP will also determine whether the BLM should cancel, modify, or lift suspensions on 16 leases in the planning area.
- A Notice of Intent to initiate scoping for the Environmental Assessment (EA) published in the Federal Register on May 18, 2016.
- The BLM-Utah worked with cooperating agencies to develop draft alternatives that were released for public input in December 2016.

#### **Moab Master Leasing Plan**

- The Moab MLP area covers 946,469 acres comprised of 785,567 acres of BLM-managed lands in west-central Grand County south of Interstate 70 and a portion of northern San Juan County.
- The MLP also addresses potash leasing in the planning area due to high interest in potash exploration and development as evidenced by the submission of more than 300 potash prospecting permit applications.
- A Record of Decision was signed on Dec. 15, 2016.
- The newly established Bears Ears National Monument contains a small portion of the Moab MLP.

#### **Monument Butte Area Oil and Gas Project Record of Decision**

- On Sept. 30, 2016, BLM-Utah signed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Monument Butte Area Oil and Gas Project in Utah's Uinta Basin to allow “infill” drilling of up to 5,750 new wells to aid in the secondary recovery of oil and gas resources in the area. The infill development plan

includes 119,743 acres of an existing oil-and-gas producing area that currently has more than 3,000 wells on federal, state and private land. These activities would disturb about 10,122 acres, which would be reduced to about 4,978 acres through interim reclamation.

- The project is estimated to generate approximately 540-600 million cubic feet of natural gas and 335 million barrels of oil over the next 20 years. Total employment would peak at just under 500 jobs during build up phases and sustain 40-50 jobs over the life of the project. About \$73.6 million in taxes would be paid to Uintah and Duchesne counties and about \$138.7 million would be paid to the state.

#### **Greater Chapita Wells Oil and Gas Infill Drilling Project**

- The proposed action for the Greater Chapita Wells project involves the infill drilling of 2,808 wells from 960 expanded existing pads and construction of 233 new pads.
- The project area is 43,071 acres in size with approximately 1,600 to 1,900 acres of disturbance (depending on alternative selected).
- Approximately 1,247 wells that produce gas and natural gas liquids exist in the project area.
- Centralized liquids gathering systems are proposed to minimize air emissions.
- A Draft EIS expected to be published mid-summer 2017.

#### **Daneros Uranium Mine Facility Expansion**

- Energy Fuels, Inc. proposes to expand facilities at the existing Daneros uranium mine located 67 miles west of Blanding, Utah, and construct new facilities at two previously-mined sites (Bullseye and South Portal Areas).
- The proposal includes constructing up to eight additional mine ventilation holes and associated infrastructure. The proposed modification would increase initially approved disturbance from 4.5 acres to 46 acres.
- Total production is expected to increase from 100,000 tons in seven years to 500,000 tons over 20 years. The mine is not currently operating, due to the low market price of uranium.
- A draft EA was released for public comment on June 15, 2016. The comment period was extended by two weeks and ended Aug. 1, 2016. Comments are being addressed and incorporated into a final EA.
- Interest has heightened since the mine is adjacent to the Bears Ears National Monument. Access to the mine is on state and county roads that pass through the national monument.

#### **UTAH TEST AND TRAINING RANGE**

- On December 23, 2016, the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 was signed into law. Sections 3001-3014 impose a number of significant requirements upon BLM Utah; generally intended to enhance the mission safety of the Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR).
- Key requirements include formation of a Community Advisory Group, Development of a Memorandum of Agreement, Temporary Closures of 703,621 acres of BLM lands, a large land exchange and mineral withdrawal.
- Provide Lands, Realty, and Cadastral Survey services for the expansion of the Utah Test and Training Range project.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES AND PLANNING**

**Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs National Conservation Areas Proposed Resource Management Plans and St. George Resource Management Plan Amendment**

- The 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act (OPLMA) established Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs National Conservation Areas and directed the BLM to consider actions on public lands that would require a plan amendment including identifying areas of “priority biological concern.” OPLMA also directed the BLM to identify one or more alternatives for a northern transportation route within Washington County in the travel management process.
- A field hearing to discuss this planning effort was held in St. George in January 2016.
- Three RODs were approved on Dec. 21, 2016. The RODS also contained grazing and recreation implementation-level decisions that were subject to a 30-day appeal period.
- Jan. 20, 2017: Washington County filed an appeal related to the Northern transportation route.
- March 23, 2017: environmental groups filed as interveners in the Washington County appeal.
- March 23, 2017: The BLM filed a 30-day extension to respond to the County’s Statement of Reasons.
- OPLMA requires the BLM to identify one or more alternatives for a “northern transportation route in the county” as part of a comprehensive travel management plan and in consultation with Washington County, the city of St. George, and other local governments. The BLM is preparing a more specific travel plan in close cooperation with the state, Washington county, and the city of St. George.
- Although the approved RMP for Red Cliffs does not designate a corridor, it does designate an avoidance area wide enough to accommodate a northern route.

**Cedar City RMP Revision**

- The Cedar City Field Office is preparing a new RMP for 2.1 million acres of BLM-administered public lands in Iron and Beaver counties, Utah.
- Since approval of the previous plans in the 1980s, there has been substantial population growth resulting in changes in recreational activity and use, renewable energy development, and wildlife plans and management.
- Due to the greater sage-grouse planning effort, the RMP planning effort was put on hold until June 2016.
- The draft EIS is currently under Washington Office review.

**Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) Livestock Grazing Plan Amendment**

- The GSENM is amending the 1999 Monument Management Plan to more thoroughly address livestock grazing decisions. Once complete, this planning effort will result in decisions about which lands should be available for livestock grazing, how much forage could be available for livestock, and specific best management practices for grazing management on the Monument.
- The planning decision may impact up to 2.1 million acres and includes lands in the Kanab and Arizona Strip field offices as well as lands managed by the National Park Service in a portion of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area where the GSENM administers livestock grazing.
- Although grazing use levels have varied considerably from year to year due to factors like drought, no reductions in permitted livestock grazing use have been made as a result of the Monument’s designation nearly 20 years ago.
- The GSENM provided draft alternatives for public input in December 2014.

- Draft alternatives were revised based on public feedback and updates were provided to the public in June 2016.
- Coordination with counties has been a priority.
- The draft EIS is under Washington Office review.
- On April 26, President Donald Trump signed an executive order mandating Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to lead a review of monuments created since 1996 that comprise at least 100,000 acres.

#### **Eastern Lake Mountains Recreational Target Shooting Closure Plan Amendment**

- The Salt Lake Field Office has restricted target shooting for public safety and resource protection under temporary closure orders since 2012.
- An EA analyzing a permanent restriction on 2,000 acres in Utah County has been completed. No protests were received and no issues were raised during the Governor's consistency review.
- To meet some of the target shooting demands, the BLM transferred 160 acres of public land to Utah County to develop the Soldier Pass Shooting Range in the southeastern Lake Mountains area. Utah County has arranged for the National Guard to begin construction. The new shooting range will be located less than three miles from the current closure area.
- A Decision Record is expected this spring, followed shortly thereafter by Supplementary Rules.
- Salt Lake Field Office staff collaborated with Utah County, City of Saratoga Springs, Utah County Sheriff, SITLA, the rock art community and target shooting community on this proposal.

#### **Wild Horse and Burro Program**

- The appropriate management level (AML) of animals established in Utah land use plans is currently set at 1,956 wild horse and burros.
- The current population exceeds AML by 284 percent (excess of ~3,572 animals).
- As of March 2017, there were 5,215 wild horses and 313 burros on public lands in Utah.
- In efforts to reduce numbers on the range, BLM-Utah removed 608 animals in FY16. To date in FY17 (Oct. 2016 to Mar. 27, 2017), 851 animals have been removed.
- In FY16, 184 wild horses and burros were adopted.
- In FY17, approximately 350-400 mares from four different herd management areas (HMA) will be treated with a fertility control vaccine.
- Utah is the only BLM state conducting research using neutering of wild stallions. This research project is being conducted in the Conger HMA. Horses were removed from these areas in FY16 and animals were returned with radio collars and GPS trackers. The neutering will occur in September 2017 along with some additional removals. This research project is being conducted in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and Colorado State University.
- BLM/Mustang Heritage Foundation partnership:
  - Trainer Incentive Program
  - Over 900 animals adopted and an active participation of over 400 trainers since October 1, 2016.

#### **Recapture Canyon ATV Trail**

- The Monticello Field Office prepared an EA to analyze an application from San Juan County for a right-of-way across public lands in Recapture Canyon for an ATV trail.

- The EA examined six alternatives in detail, ranging from granting the county a right-of-way for an 11.6-mile trail system allowing motorized use through Recapture Canyon to a “no action” alternative that would limit travel to designated routes with no new ATV trail system authorized.
- On Sept. 9, 2016, the EA was released for a 45-day public comment period.
- The decision record was signed on April 10, 2017.

#### **Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative**

- The Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) is a partnership-driven effort to conserve, restore, and manage ecosystems. This partnership effort began in 2003.
- Since FY06, 1,856 WRI projects have been completed or are in progress.
- Approximately 1.58 million acres have been treated to date.
- Over 400 miles of stream have been restored to proper functioning condition.
- In FY16, BLM-Utah completed treatments on approximately 71,000 acres that benefited greater sage-grouse, including mechanical vegetation treatments and seeding.
- BLM-Utah has contributed over \$80 million to the Utah watershed restoration initiative. In FY 16, the BLM contributed \$8.3 million in funding, with over \$2 million matched by the State of Utah and NGO partners. For FY17, BLM-Utah has obligated \$4.2 million.

#### **Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Effort**

- BLM-Utah is implementing the Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for 14 land use plans in Utah. This includes coordination on many habitat improvement projects throughout the state with Watershed Restoration Initiative partners. Thus far, in FY17, 41,441 acres have been treated, more than any other state with sage-grouse habitat.
- The State of Utah is currently working on a state-level rule making effort that addresses mitigation in greater sage-grouse habitat. The BLM has worked with the state in designing the states process to enable the BLM the best opportunity to apply the states mitigation approach on public lands.
- BLM-Utah, USFS, and State of Utah developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for multi-agency coordination of greater sage-grouse conservation. These agencies continue to adjust the MOU to reflect the needs of sage-grouse conservation in the state, including addressing the state’s draft mitigation rule.
- The BLM and the State of Utah have coordinated closely on developing and implementing measures to assist the recovery of the greater sage-grouse population in the Sheeprocks area.

#### **Statewide Initiatives and Partnerships**

- In 2016, BLM-Utah launched the Respect and Protect campaign, which aims to eliminate the looting and vandalism of archaeological and paleontological resources from public lands in Utah.
- BLM-Utah collaborated with the non-profit organization Tread Lightly! to promote responsible visitation. This unique partnership focuses on volunteer and stewardship opportunities, and a call to action to report looting and vandalism through a new statewide hotline.
- In partnership with Friends of Cedar Mesa, the BLM has established a Statewide Site Stewardship Program to increase the number of volunteer citizen stewards monitoring at-risk cultural resource sites on public lands in Utah.

- In partnership with Southern Utah University, BLM-Utah has invested \$180,000 to increase its Project Archaeology heritage education programs and events in K-12 classrooms across the state.

#### **Cedar Mesa and Monticello Field Office Initiatives**

- The Monticello Field Office and Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum continued to expand the Site Stewardship Program partnership in 2015. Approximately 58 volunteers – twice as many volunteers over FY14 levels – were trained and are now regularly monitoring at-risk archaeological sites in Cedar Mesa.
- Between FY16 and 17, the BLM will conduct 11 stabilization projects on ancestral Pueblo architectural sites under contracts.
- Each year, the Monticello Field Office issues over 10,000 permits, including permits issued to San Juan River rafters and Cedar Mesa backcountry users.
- The Monticello Field Office actively promotes archaeological resources and ethics within their community; each year, staff typically give cultural resources appreciation and anti-looting presentations to hundreds of San Juan County elementary school students and hundreds of Boy and Girl Scouts from across the region.
- The Monticello Field Office, in collaboration with the Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum, has brought Project Archaeology events to southeast Utah. This includes a FY15 Project Archaeology workshop for San Juan County teachers on incorporating southwestern archaeology and archaeological ethics into lesson plans consistent with core curriculum requirements and a FY16 event for the Girl Scouts on Cedar Mesa.

#### **Bears Ears National Monument**

- The BLM has prioritized visitor information to help with trip planning to protect cultural resources and have a safe and enjoyable experience when visiting the area. Recreational information has been updated on the BLM's website including maps and brochures.
- The BLM Utah State Office has provided staffing assistance to the Monticello Field Office to handle increased visitation and the field office has been working on filling staffing needs to hire seasonal employees for the peak visitation season.
- The BLM has reached out to the State of Utah, San Juan County, to Tribes, local partners, and other partners to discuss current actions and potential opportunities to work together on projects in the National Monument.
- The BLM has continued field office planning efforts for projects that will enhance recreational opportunities and experiences in the area. Projects currently under review include new and improved camping facilities, trailheads, and interpretive sites.
- The BLM has been working to stabilize sensitive cultural sites, install protective fences, and provide interpretive information at some of the more frequently visited sites. The BLM has also initiated several cultural resource related projects including cultural resource inventories in high-use areas.
- On April 26, President Donald Trump signed an executive order mandating Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to lead a review of monuments created since 1996 that comprise at least 100,000 acres.

#### **FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

## **2017 Fire Weather Forecast**

- From Nov. 1 through early February, Utah received significant precipitation; however, we are still below average.
- In March, the Great Basin received a significant amount of precipitation, but the temperatures have persisted above average.
- April, May, and June weather patterns are expected to stay dry with above average temperatures.
- The July and August forecasts favor lower temperatures and precipitation.
- We are currently in a neutral El Nino Southern Oscillation pattern that will evolve over the fire season into an El Nino pattern.
- With current data, an extreme fire season is not expected.

## **BLM-Utah Wildfire Resources**

### ***Staff***

- Permanent - 150 employees
- Seasonal - 90 employees
- Hotshot Crews - Bonneville Hotshots
- Camp Crews - 13 crews employed 160 youth. The crews are based out of the six counties surrounding Richfield (age range 16-19).

### ***Equipment***

- Engines - 41
- Dozers - 2
- Water tenders - 6

### ***Aerial Resources***

- 2 Exclusive use Helitack Platforms
- 2 Exclusive use Air Attack platforms
- 4 Single Engine Air Tankers

### ***Partnerships***

- BLM-Utah received \$85,000 from the National Interagency Fire Center in FY17 for the Local Cooperator Assistance Program.
- Rural Fire Departments (RFD) and Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD) are typically the first responders to wildfires throughout Utah.
- These funds are dedicated to providing instructors, education and training materials to the RFDs/VFDs to improve firefighting tactics in Utah's sage-steppe ecosystems.

### ***Community Assistance***

- BLM-Utah is committed to wildfire mitigation and reducing wildfire impacts to communities throughout Utah.
- Approximately \$50,000 will be dedicated to a Community Assistance Agreement for wildfire mitigation work.
- Over the next five fiscal years, BLM-Utah anticipates adding up to \$100,000 each year.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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